

Questions for the MBTA representative, regarding the Belmont rail improvement work

MBTA Responses February 26, 2015.

There is concern about the excess vibration so close to properties, and the effect it is having on foundations, walls, and ceilings. Neighbors have newly formed foundation cracks, some letting ground water in to their basements.

Response: Please clarify this issue – what “excess vibration” is being referred to? When does it occur?

Will this new equipment being installed, require trains to stop and idle on the tracks, along Channing Road? If so, for how long, how often, and exactly where?

Response: The new crossovers that are being installed will not require the trains to stop and idle under normal circumstances.

Will the speed of the trains increase? If so, what will the speed be?

Response: Train speeds along the Fitchburg Line are being generally increased in order to reduce the overall Fitchburg to Porter Square trip time by 10 minutes. The current maximum train speed in the Channing Road area is being increased from 60 mph to 79mph. Actual train speed will vary due to stops and the 50 mph curve at Belmont station.

What short and long term changes will this project have on the area?

Response: There will be construction work on the tracks during the Spring of 2015 to complete the installation of the crossovers and activate the signal system. Some of this work will occur on two weekends, round the clock, due to its nature. Retired equipment will be removed during the summer and fall. There will be no commuter rail service on weekends during the 2015 construction season. The overall project is schedule to complete by the end of 2015. Long term change in the Channing Road area is expected to be minimal.

Please explain what the end result of this work will be, in terms of the impact to our neighborhood.

Response: No significant permanent impacts to the neighborhood are expected. The new crossovers are designed to avoid generating additional noise.

When will the work be complete? The single flier distributed indicated the project should be over by now.

Response: Preparatory work was performed during 2014. The installation of the new crossovers and activation of the signal system will occur during the Spring of 2015.

Why is work being done in the middle of the night when people are trying to sleep?

Response: Certain work activities, such as placing the new crossover in the track, or modifying the curve at Belmont Station, require construction operations to “break” and occupy the track. This work is done on weekends or at night to avoid disruption to weekday (peak) commuter rail service.

Is this work going to continue down the tracks towards Cambridge?

Response: The Fitchburg Line Improvement Project involves a series of infrastructure improvements all along the 50-mile length of this line to improve service. Work in the Channing Road area includes the curve modifications at Belmont station (largely complete), the new crossovers, removal of the crossover at Brighton Street, new grade crossing warning system at Brighton Street, and curve realignment in the yard area east of Brighton Street.

Exactly how will Brighton Street’s “Hill’s Crossing” be changed/modified as a result of this project?

Response: The grade crossing warning signals at Brighton Street will be replaced with similar, new equipment that is compatible with the new signal system on the Line.

Can larger plans be brought to this meeting and explained in detail, what will happen from Hill’s Crossing to the Belmont Center Station and why?

Response: Yes.